A SERMON,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. *JONATHAN L. POMEROY.*

10

THE DUTY OF A PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR THEIR MINISTER.

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PREACHED AT THE

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OF THE

REV. *JONATHAN LAW POMEROY,*

To the paſtoral Care of the Congregational CHURCH and SOCIETY in WORTHINGTON.

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The effectual fervent Prayer *of a righteous* Man *availeth much.* ST. JAMES.

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WITHAL praying alſo for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to ſpeak the myſtery of Chriſt.—That I may make it manifeſt, as I ought to ſpeak.

THE goſpel miniſtry, though an honourable calling, and though many branches of the office are the moſt intereſting and edifying to a good mind, has its attendant difficulties, perplexities and diſcouragements. That a man who is well furniſhed, with ſuitable gifts, and regularly called to the ſacred function, may greatly heſitate, and tremble on the anticipation of the duty, and ſervice before him.

Thoſe who conceive the work of the miniſtry to be eaſy and light, requiring little attention and application, labour under a great miſtake. To diſpenſe the word and to adminiſter the holy ſacrament, to the gathering of the ſaints, and the edification of the body of Jeſus Chriſt, is a moſt painful, and arduous ſervice. It was an obſervation of one of the ancients, "It is the eaſieſt thing to hear, and it is the painfulleſt thing to preach the goſpel aright."

Our apoſtle had, from his own experience, formed a like opinion. And therefore, having had occaſion to give ſome directions to the Coloſſians, reſpecting the duty of prayer in general, here, he requeſts an intereſt in

in their prayers, for himſelf, and for all the miniſters of Chriſt. "Withal praying alſo for us," &c.

I ſhall diſcourſe upon the ſubject, in the following method,—viz. Attempt to ſhow, that the proper office of a miniſter, is to ſpeak the myſtery of Chriſt—That this office ought to be performed, in the way of clear demonſtration, and plainneſs of addreſs—and, that it is the duty of the people to pray, that their miniſter may be directed and aſſiſted of God, in the performance of this office.

I. I ſhall attempt to ſhow, that the proper office of a miniſter is, to ſpeak the myſtery of Chriſt. "A myſtery is a purpoſe and decree of God, unknown to, and unſearchable by men, unleſs firſt, by revelation, diſcovered and made known, by God himſelf." As the term is here uſed, it denotes the doctrines of the goſpel, or the whole ſyſtem of Chriſtianity; called alſo a myſtery of godlineſs, the myſtery of the kingdom, &c. all of which ſignify one and the ſame thing. The goſpel is called a myſtery, on account of its wonderful depths; many parts of the ſame, being ſecret and unſearchable. The ſpiritual truths contained in divine revelation are, in ſome reſpects, ſo profound and deep, as to baffle the underſtanding and wit of the wiſeſt of men. Yea, the angels of light, whoſe intellects are brighter, and whoſe capacity, for penetrating into the depths of divine wiſdom, far exceeds ours, are repreſented as ſtooping down, to look into the marvellous works of redemption, and the ſecrets of the goſpel.

Since then the doctrines of Chriſt have ſpecial relation to mankind, and the written word may not be ſo clearly underſtood; God hath left gifts in the church—authoriſed ſome to interpret. "As the eunuch was reading, God ſent him an interpreter." Infinite wiſdom has ſeen fit to ordain the miniſtry of men, to carry on the deſigns of redeeming love and grace: To whoſe province

province, it ſhould pertain, to ſtudy, unfold, and publiſh thoſe truths, on which the ſalvation of his elect ſhould depend; an ordination, of all others, the beſt calculated for beings of the ſame character and ſituation.

It is neceſſary that the doctrines of the goſpel, which are the myſtery of Chriſt, ſhould be made manifeſt, that mankind ſhould not be ignorant of God, and of their duty to him. The ſcripture is clear in itſelf; but there is a covering of natural blindneſs upon the eyes of men, which the guides of the church are appointed, and ought to be qualified to remove. This is intimated, by that paſſage in the book of Job, "If there be a meſſenger with him, an interpreter, one of a thouſand, to ſhow a man his uprightneſs."——There are meſſengers from God, authoriſed to ſpeak, in his name, to relieve poor ſouls; to whoſe office it belongs, clearly to explain, forceably to expreſs, and cloſely apply the truths of God's word. That what is there briefly expreſſed, by earneſt and copious exhortations, may be inculcated upon mankind; that ſinners, being dealt with effectually, might be convinced of their duty, and rouſed to ſeek after the favour of God in Chriſt. The apoſtle's mode of arguing upon the ſubject is thus: The goſpel is the power of God to ſalvation, but to whom? to every one without exception? No, it is limited to ſuch only as believe. But how is faith wrought? by the bare letter and ſentence of the goſpel, recorded in the written word? No, but by the goſpel preached. How then ſhall men call on him, in whom they have not believed? and how ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how ſhall they hear without a preacher?" From which, it is evident, that the preaching of the word is a proper mean to produce faith, which contains the myſtery of Chriſt. And of conſequence, that it is the office of a miniſter to

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preach the doctrines of the gospel—to open, expound, and apply them, for the purpose of working saving knowledge and faith.

The christian ministry is not an human institution, nor designed for secular purposes, but to promote the salvation and happiness of men. Nor are the ministers of Christ left at their election what or how to preach. But they are expressly directed and charged to "preach the mystery of Christ." Were they not thus limited in their commission, might we not expect their speculations and discourses would be extended to subjects of an inferior nature? might not interested and unworthy motives induce them, amidst a great variety of sermons, to say little of Christ? and the principal end of the ministry be entirely defeated? If they were not obliged to preach the mystery of Christ, they might discourse very learnedly on the subjects of physic, law, philosophy and the like, but never gain one soul to Christ. A man of genius is able to write sensibly, upon any subject, whether moral, philosophical or religious. And were ministers at liberty, in all their public exhibitions, to choose their subjects at large, their discourses might be infinitely diversified; and many a precious soul suffered to perish, for want of the sincere milk of the word.

But happy is it for mankind, that those, to whose office it belongs to teach, are under particular instructions themselves, by the great head of the church, from which they cannot vary with safety. These are their instructions, "preach the mysteries of Christ." All the discretionary liberty, that is allowed them, is to treat upon such particular doctrines of the gospel, at this, or the other season, as they judge will best apply to the state of the flock over which they are constituted overseers. However it may be charitably supposed, that a good minister will dwell principally, in his preaching,

preaching, upon thoſe doctrines of the goſpel, which are of the higheſt importance—ſuch as the apoſtacy of man, and the method of his recovery—the perſon and character of the Saviour, his offices and benefits—the predeſtination and reprobation of men—the grace of Jeſus Chriſt, and the manner of its operation, upon the human heart—the excellency and neceſſity of goſpel obedience—the reſurrection of the dead, the future judgment, and the like.

It would be tedious, at this ſeaſon, ſhould I do more than mention in general, ſome of thoſe chriſtian doctrines, which ought to be moſt frequently inculcated upon a people by their miniſter; which would be, in the ſenſe of the apoſtle, preaching the myſtery of Chriſt.

II. This office ought to be performed, in the way of clear demonſtration, and plainneſs of addreſs. It was the requeſt of the apoſtle, "that he might make the myſtery of Chriſt manifeſt, as he ought to ſpeak." In this, St. Paul, doubtleſs had reference, both to the excellency of the doctrines of the goſpel itſelf, and of that truſt of apoſtleſhip, that was repoſed in him. Reſpecting the former, he would keep in his view the ſuperiour excellency of the ſubject matter of his preaching: and the duty incumbent upon him, to make it as clear and evident as poſſible; that every ſcruple, reſpecting its truth, might be removed from the minds of his hearers—and alſo, that he might never be tempted to hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs, or neglect to uſe the ſame honeſt freedom and plainneſs, when occaſion required, as Nathan uſed with David, ſaying, "thou art the man"

That man is unfit to be employed, in the work of the goſpel miniſtry who, either neglects to ſearch for truth, or forbears to deliver the ſame through fear of men. Plainneſs of addreſs is perfectly conſiſtent with the ſtricteſt rules of decorum; and the making choice

of acceptable words, in reproving, as well as inſtructing, is an incumbent duty. Perſpicuity and plainneſs is ever deſirable in a preacher. It ought to be his object, to make the truths of God's word eaſy, familiar, and manifeſt, that they might be apprehended and eaſily underſtood, by the moſt ordinary capacity—and as if Jeſus Chriſt was painted out, before the eyes of men. As the apoſtle ſaid, by way of reproof to the Galatians, "O fooliſh Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you ſhould not obey the truth, before whoſe eyes, Jeſus Chriſt hath been evidently ſet forth, crucified among you."

When truth is exhibited, with clear demonſtration, it comes with irreſiſtible force, upon the hearer, that he is conſtrained to yield his aſſent. Hence our apoſtle calls his preaching of the goſpel, a declaration ~~in~~ or manifeſtation of the truth: "but have renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifeſtation of the truth, commending ourſelves to every man's conſcience, in the ſight of God." Without doing thus, the object, or deſign of preaching is entirely defeated; which is to bring men to knowledge and faith in Chriſt: that they may know Chriſt, and him crucified, and believe in him, to their comfort and ſalvation. But this cannot be effected, nor the end attained, unleſs men rightly conceive and underſtand the doctrines of Chriſt. For how is this poſſible, unleſs they are exhibed with that degree of evidence and plainneſs, as to be underſtood?

That manner of preaching, therefore, cannot be juſtified, that is full of obſcurity: where the doctrine is wrapt up in a certain phraſeology, which is above the underſtanding of the hearers: where ideas are couched in ambiguous terms, which perplex and confuſe the mind, ſo that it receives no edification. Some perſons may have adopted that mode of preaching, with a view to acquire

acquire the character of being men of profound erudition. But doth not that preacher far exceed them in learning, who is able rightly to unfold the myſtery of Chriſt, and manifeſt the truths of the goſpel? Who is able to paint out Chriſt to his people, in ſuch a ſtriking manner, that they may, as it were, ſee him crucified and glorified; the life that flows from his blood, and the comforts which are treaſured up in Him? If the improvement of our people, in the knowledge of God, in faith and obedience, is the great end which we ought to propoſe to ourſelves, in the diſcharge of our office, and in the uſe of our gifts; it ſurely ought to be an object with us to preach intelligently; to preach to edification, exhortation, and comfort. The apoſtle Paul had ſo great regard to the end of his miniſtry, which was inſtruction, or communicating divine knowledge to his hearers, that he declares to the Corinthians "that he had rather ſpeak five words in the church with his underſtanding, to the inſtruction of others, than ten thouſand words in an unknown tongue."

That preacher who is ever dealing in myſtery, who is fond of thoſe dry and knotty points in ſcience, which are mere matters of ſpeculation, and have no relation to chriſtian practice, I humbly conceive to be a moſt unprofitable preacher. The greater proportion of the hearers are unlearned; and ſuch perſons reliſh thoſe truths moſt, which are eaſy and familiar; or that are clearly demonſtrated. Thoſe, indeed, who are better taught, if they except againſt the truth delivered, merely on account of its familiar plainneſs; having itching ears, which are delighted only with loſty expreſſions, or technical phraſes, which are unintelligible by others, groſsly betray a weakneſs of underſtanding, and unſoundneſs of judgment.

The plainneſs here urged is well conſiſtent with a pure and manly ſtyle, free of thoſe rude and ruſtic, or unſeemly expreſſions which debaſe the ſubject, and

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are grating to the ears of the hearers. To ſuch perſpicuity and plainneſs, in preaching the word, I conceive the apoſtle had reference, in the phraſe, " making it manifeſt, as I ought to ſpeak."

It may be further obſerved, that a miniſter muſt not only be careful to manifeſt, or lay open the doctrines of the word, but he muſt have regard to the manner—to ſee that it is becoming its excellency, the dignity of his calling, and the truſt repoſed in him. 'If a man ſpeak, ſays the apoſtle, let him ſpeak as the oracles of God." Not only to deliver the truth, but to deliver it with due reverence and faith. The honorable titles given him in ſacred writ, ſhould inſpire him to do thus. He is called the " meſſenger and ambaſſador of Chriſt." He is dignified with the title of " angel." He is ſaid to be the " Lord's ſteward," put in truſt by him. All which teach us, that perſons of ſuch character ought to deliver the meſſage of their Lord and Maſter with due regard to the dignity of their meſſage, and anſwerable to that truſt which is repoſed in them.

I. A miniſter muſt take heed, more particularly, that he preaches the pure doctrines of the word. As the ſcriptures themſelves are pure, they ſhould be purely thought on, and purely delivered, without any mixture of man's devices and authorities. A Miniſter has no right to propound any thing to others, but what he has in command from God, and what he knows to be certainly agreeable to his will. As an Ambaſſador muſt not go beyond his commiſſion, if he doth, it is at his peril. When God gave us our commiſſion, this he gave us in charge, " teach them all things, that I have commanded you." One obſerves " that the firſt miſchief in the church came from dogmatizing; men would be wiſe above the word; that made way for foul abuſes; and they for hereſies: and adds when we preſs things without warrant, others queſtion all."

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Our divine writer and example declares often, that he kept punctually to his commiſſion. "For I have not ſpoken of myſelf, ſays he, but the Father which ſent me, he gave me a commandment, what I ſhould ſay, and what I ſhould ſpeak." Chriſt would not vary, in the ſmalleſt degree, from his inſtructions. When we are adding to the word, others will detract from it. It is happy for us, and happy for our people, when we are able to ſay, "my doctrine is not mine, but his that ſent me." This I have in charge from God, when we have clear evidence, from the word, and a ſtrong influence from the ſpirit, to deliver ſuch a meſſage: not the viſions of our own brain, but the councils of God, to the people. It is equally to the diſcredit of a preacher, to obtrude upon his hearers the "fancies, figments, or traditions of men, inſtead of the oracles of God." It is diſguſtful to the more diſcerning, and injurious to the unlearned, as it is calculated to lead them into error.

There are two modes of preaching which are of fatal tendency. One is, when teachers pretending to deliver the word of God, make uſe of the enticing words of man's wiſdom, treating ſpiritual things, in a carnal manner. Striving by rhetorical flouriſhes to work upon the affections, rather than to inform the underſtanding. Or by logical reaſoning, to biaſs the underſtanding and judgment, and "teaching men to draw concluſions from connatural principles; which is the direct way, to make the faith of chriſtians ſtand in the wiſdom of men, and not in the power of God." The other when they mingle the word with their own, or other mens devices; than which, what can be more unworthy a miniſter? Our Lord ſaith by the prophet, "what is the chaff to the wheat?" He that conceives his own ſpeculations, or the opinions of others to be preferable to the declarations of the bible,

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and makes a practice of advancing those publicly to the neglect of these, must be viewed as a most injudicious and unprofitable teacher.

2. In handling the word of God, the christian minister will endeavour to deliver it in plain evidence, and demonstration of the spirit,—that is, his preaching should be calculated to rebuke sin, judge the conscience, and make manifest the secret corruption of the heart; that it may be a means, by God's blessing, to produce the grace of faith, and holy obedience, in the hearers. Yea, it would be a most important and happy circumstance, for a minister to bring the truths of God's word to the hearers, with such demonstrative evidence, "that they could discern the power, the presence and majesty of God in the preaching of it; and be compelled to say, in plain terms, without question, God is the preacher." That, says the apostle, is the right handling the word of God, when the preachers of it show not words, but power. When the spirit of God accompanies the word to the good of the hearers, and the efficacy of the preacher's doctrine appears in his holy life and conversation.

III. It is the duty of a people, to pray, that their minister may be directed, and assisted of God, in the performance of this office.

All the gifts and qualifications which are requisite to the ministry are of God; and are to be sought for by prayer and supplication. Ministers themselves, who feel their own insufficiency, for the important service, to which they are called, need be much and often at the throne of grace, for divine assistance, and direction. And the people are under sacred obligations, to pray for their teachers. The dispensers of the mysteries of salvation, above all men, need the help of your prayers. No prayers can be too fervent to strengthen, and encourage the ministers of Christ to an holy perse-

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verance in duty, under the difficulties and diſcouragements peculiar to their office. How affectionately doth the apoſtle Paul call for this every where, "Brethren pray for us." It is a duty you owe, and it may not only be a great comfort to us, but of great profit to yourſelves. God would have all orders in the church obliged to one another, you for our inſtructions and we for your prayers. "The head cannot ſay to the feet we have no need of thee." Our calling is incumbered with many difficulties—many temptations.

The many things neceſſary, to make our miniſtry uſeful to you, call for your prayers. That we may make a right uſe of our abilities, be able paſtors, faithful, ſucceſsful. That we may not be permitted, from love of eaſe, love of the world, or errors in judgment, to miſlead you; nor be diſheartened ourſelves, for want of ſucceſs. We have too great occaſion, at the preſent day, to lament for the miniſtry, that her friends, her open friends and interceſſors, are ſo few! multitudes, inſtead of praying for their miniſter, are ever ready to oppoſe his miniſtry; clandeſtinely ſeeking to undermine or overthrow it. The calling is reprobated and deteſted, as if it were ſome grievance, plague, or heavy burthen on the world. The greater therefore, brethren, is the obligation lying upon you, to pray for us, "that we may be delivered from unreaſonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith." Pray that the lights in the churches be not eclipſed, that we may ſecure our ſtanding, amidſt the aſſaults of Satan, "and vindicate the truths of God to men."

People are heard ſometimes to complain ſadly of the defects, that are found in thoſe, who ſerve in the weighty calling of the miniſtry. May I be ſuffered to enquire, whether there is the leaſt probability that thoſe perſons have ever ſought a ſupply of their miniſter's wants, and ſtrength to his weakneſſes, by fervent prayer

ef to God, in his behalf? A people may ſpy many wants, and imperfections in the beſt and moſt faithful miniſters, if they are ſtudious to make that an object. But what is their duty in that caſe? To reſt in ſeeing, complaining, and reproaching? or in making uſe of thoſe means, which God hath put in their power for redreſs, viz. beſeeching God to furniſh their miniſters more abundantly for their work, and to renounce all obſtructions to their greater uſefulneſs. And, when they pray for their miniſter, they ſhould remember to pray for him chiefly for "his works ſake." Not to content themſelves in praying that he may be a peaceable man, not contentious—or that his outward deportment may give general ſatisfaction, (however theſe are deſirable) but as they are taught by the apoſtle, they are to have their miniſter in ſingular love for "his works ſake." One great cauſe why a people find no ſweetneſs, in the comforts delivered by their miniſter, is becauſe they have not prayed, that a door of utterance may be given him; that his heart may be directed, and his mouth opened, to addreſs them to their comfort and edification. It has been an old maxim, but not the leſs true, that a praying people will make a preaching miniſter. Certain it is, that God hears the prayers of his own people; and will ſend them a gracious anſwer, let the favor ſought be either for themſelves or others—"the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much."

The reaſons why a people ought to pray for their miniſter are many, too many to enumerate at this time. Suffice it to ſay, they are leaders of God's people, who are in arms againſt the prince of darkneſs, and are likely to meet with many aſſaults from him, his inſtruments and agents. And ~~then,~~ people are ſo deeply intereſted in their ſucceſs, that the caſting down of the miniſters, is the overthrow of the people.

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If the ſhepherds are ſmitten, their people like ſheep, will be ſcattered abroad. They are placed, as watchmen upon the walls of a caſtle; if they are blinded, or corrupted, the fortreſs may be eaſily ſurpriſed by the enemy. Miniſters, without divine aſſiſtance, are unable to diſcharge any part of their office. If the miniſter has knowledge, he may be deſtitute of the gift of utterance. If he has ever ſo much learning, he may be unable to publiſh the ſecrets of the goſpel to edification. The prophet, in the time of the old teſtament, ſaid, "the prieſt's lips ſhould preſerve knowledge." He ſhould not only have it in his head, but he ſhould be able to utter it to ſuch as ſought information of him; and aſſigns this reaſon, "He is the meſſenger of the Lord of hoſts." And being an ambaſſador of the Lord to his people, he muſt of neceſſity be able to deliver his embaſſy.

Again, the people attain their faith ordinarily by hearing; therefore it is of importance, that the miniſter ſhould be able, by his preaching, to beget faith in them, and to confirm the ſame. Hence the apoſtle, in giving the deſcription of one that is to be choſen to that ſacred office of the miniſtry, requires chiefly, that he be "apt to teach."

From which it appears, that a happy talent of communicating divine truths to mankind, is very deſirable. And that the knowledge of holy things, and of the myſteries of Chriſt, without this, is not ſufficient for a public teacher. Therefore, it becomes a people to make their requeſt of God, that their miniſter may be well furniſhed with the gift of utterance, in order to his "ſpeaking the myſteries of Chriſt, as they ought to be ſpoken." For, let a man have ever ſo much knowledge, and be as full of good matter as was Elihu, "unleſs the Lord put words into his mouth, he ſhall be dumb, and not able to utter it." When Moſes

plead infirmity, that he was not eloquent, but a man of a ſlow ſpeech, and ſlow of tongue, the Lord ſaid unto him, "who hath made man's mouth." Q. d.—doſt thou not conſider, that I only give ability and power to ſpeak to whom I will, and that I take it away at my pleaſure? Therefore go thy way, and I will be with thy mouth, and I will teach thee what thou ſhall ſay." Now it is reaſon ſufficient for the people of God to pray, that their miniſter may be thus endowed, becauſe it is God's gift for their edification, and to be expected in no other way.

I will only add, that a people ought in this way to give public teſtimony, that they do not only acknowledge the perſons of their miniſters but alſo acknowledge that their calling is a goſpel inſtitution. Wicked men could never obtain that power, which they ſometimes have over miniſters, was there not ſome backwardneſs and faintneſs in the people of God, to own them. Herod could have put John to death, "but he feared the multitude becauſe they accounted him for a prophet." The depoſing the miniſtry, will not only be imputed to the violence of others, but to the coldneſs and ingratitude of ſuch as neglect to pray for its ſupport. The people of God ought, therefore, to let the ſcoffing world know, by this public vindication, that they are not afraid to own Chriſt's inſtitutions.

When ſubjects have a charter given by a prince, how zealous are they that it might not be infringed? Whatever may be the ſentiments of infidels, this is Chriſt's royal gift in the day of his inauguration, "when he aſcended on high, he gave ſome apoſtles and ſome prophets, and ſome evangeliſts, and ſome paſtors and teachers." If then, the order is of divine appointment, let the friends of Zion ſtand, and plead for it more fervently, that it may be preſerved and bleſſed, for the

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ingathering the elect of God; and never harbour the thought, that such a rich gift of heaven, as that of the evangelical ministry, is not deserving your private intercessions, and public vindication.

I must not further enlarge. This inference will naturally arise from the subject, as above considered, that it is a laborious service to preach the word of God aright. It is a prevailing opinion, that a minister's service is very light; that their preparations for the sacred desk cost them but little labour, for they mostly deliver that which first comes into their mind. In this, they are greatly mistaken, if ministers speak the word as it ought to be spoken. Preaching the word of God requires great labour, study, meditation, and prayer. And when ministers have done their best, they have many anxious fears, lest they have not dispensed the word of life, with that purity, simplicity, plainness and perspicuity which the infinite importance of the subject demands. Indeed, were they totally neglectful of ministerial duty, and were willing to risque the consequences of unfaithfulness, they might greatly ease themselves of the burden of their office. But if they would not handle the word of God deceitfully, but make it manifest, as it ought to be spoken; if they deliver it purely and powerfully, with such evidence and demonstration of the spirit that it may judge the conscience and search the secret corners of the heart, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart:" their studies are laborious and their service is hard.

2. It affords the faithful ministers of Christ great consolation, under the labour and difficulties of their office, that Christ, who has called them to the ministry, is abundantly able to assist them, and to carry them through their service. Were it not for such a consid-

eration,

eration, their courage would often fail, and they would ſink under deſpondency. They many times meet with ſo much perſonal abuſe, are treated with ſo much neglect, experience ſo little candour or charity, ſympathy under trouble and relief under preſſing neceſſities; and are ſo much ſtraitened in their ſupport, and the ſame ſo grudgingly miniſtred; and at the eve of life being viewed as a nuiſance, from which ſociety would gladly rid herſelf; that theſe cruel misfortunes would ſoon overwhelm the ſpirits of a virtuous miniſter, and tempt him to quit the office, were it not for the divine promiſe, "my grace ſhall be ſufficient for thee, for my *ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs.*" With ſuch a ſupport as this, they riſe ſuperior to all diſcouragements, and reſolve to ſpend and be ſpent in the ſervice of their Lord.

3. We learn the neceſſity, under which miniſters are laid, of having the prayers of their people. Indeed this duty is reciprocal. Miniſters are bound to pray for their people; and they are under obligation to pray for their miniſter. It is not optional with either, but it is a divine injunction, which is eternally binding. And the dear relation, in which they ſtand to each other, will naturally prompt to the duty; beſide the advantages which reſult to the parties, from its being properly diſcharged; for the way to find comfort in our friends, is to pray for them.

The people of God are deſirous of deriving ſpiritual benefit, from an attendance upon divine inſtitutions. If they have been begotten through the word, or are thus deſirous; or would make progreſs in knowledge and grace, and be in a growing meetneſs for heaven, they will not fail to pray for their miniſter, through whoſe inſtrumentality their ſpiritual deſires may be accompliſhed

The miniſter, on the other hand, moſt ſincerely deſirous of ſeeing the effects of his labours, and of having

the ſatisfaction and honour of being inſtrumental of the converſion, and ſalvation of men, and of ſharing the rich rewards of ſuch as turn many to righteouſneſs, will never forget to carry his people to the throne of grace, and to plead for their converſion, edification and comfort.

The addreſſes, uſual on ſimilar occaſions, will cloſe our ſubject. The truths we have been conſidering well apply themſelves to us, who are miniſters.

With all humility, reſpect and affection, would I remind my reverend fathers and brethren in the miniſtry, of the excellency, weight and importance of the ſacred office, in which they are inveſted of God. It is of no leſs importance, than to preach the myſteries of Chriſt: to explain, apply and enforce the doctrines of the goſpel, upon poor periſhing ſinners, by all the motives which you find it contains. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we perſuade men." Our duty though hard and difficult, is good, and glorious. It naturally calls us to contemplate thoſe truths, on a belief of which our own ſalvation, as well as that of our people, depends. To underſtand which, and to communicate them to our people, as they ought to be communicated, we need ourſelves to be divinely taught. What then is our duty, but to be aſſiduous in the ſearch, and ſtudy of the ſacred ſcriptures," which are able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works." And as God has erected a throne of grace, from whence he diſpenſes all needed favors, ought we not to frequent it, in low proſtration and fervency, that God would more abundantly furniſh us with all needed qualifications, for the right diſcharge of the duties of our office, and render us ſucceſsful? And ſhall we not eſteem it a peculiar favor, and requeſt it as ſuch of the people of God, that they would remember us, in all their addreſſes at the

throne

throne of grace? Did the Apoſtle Paul, who was guided by the ſpirit of God, and had the infallible aſſurance of the ſpirit, being an Apoſtle, deſire to be prayed for, that he might utter the doctrine of the goſpel as it became him to ſpeak, how great cauſe then, have we, who are but ordinary miniſters, to deſire the prayers of the church. Let us never forget her, and we may truſt God will give her a heart to pray for us. By our united exertions, may we do much ſervice for God in our day; and when diſmiſſed from office, meet his approbation, and be admitted to the employments, and felicities above.—

Our ſubject may, with propriety, be addreſſed to him particularly, who is about to be ſet over this people in the Lord.

Dear Sir,

It is with ſingular ſatisfaction, that we find you have ſolved thoſe doubts, which, for ſometime, held you in ſuſpenſe reſpecting your future employment and that you are, at length, diſpoſed to take part in the miniſtry with us. The dignity, honor and excellency of the ſacred function, carry in it charms ſufficient to excite deſires, in a good mind, to be introduced into ſuch a noble employment. But thoſe, who are about to be admitted into the miniſterial office, as well as thoſe, who are already in office, ought to conſider, that the office of a miniſter is not a bare name, title, dignity, or place of honor and command, ſimilar with other offices, but it is a "work," a place of ſervice of vaſt importance, labor and difficulty, ſuch ought to conſider maturely the great weight of the important ſervice, and enter into it with extraordinary dread and caution, "looking upon their office, not with aſpiring, but with humble views and trembling hearts, "for who is ſufficient for theſe things?" The more you become acquainted, with the duties, and difficulties of the miniſterial

iſterial office, the more ſenſible will you be of the ſpecial need of divine aid; and that, altho' of yourſelf, you apprehend you can do little, yet thro' ſtrength derived from God, you will find that you can do all things," i. e. all things incumbent upon you as a miniſter. In preaching the myſteries of Chriſt, which is to be your future employment, you have been reminded, that there is required great plainneſs and perſpicuity. No truths neceſſary to reſtrain men from vice or error, or to eſtabliſh them in virtue, may be omitted. All ſophiſtical reaſoning, obſcure, and unmeaning expreſſions, or "deceitful handling the word of God," you will cautiouſly avoid. Feed your people with the ſincere milk of the word, and keep nothing back, which, in faithfulneſs to your truſt, you ought to deliver.—But in doing this, make choice of acceptable words; ſuch as are likely to pleaſe men, for their good, to edification. Never give into the belief, that words of truth cannot be faithfully delivered in a pleaſing ſtile. Good matter is often injured by an ill dreſs, and by ungratefulneſs and incongruity of expreſſion. Great care is to be exerciſed by you, that you "make the myſtery of Chriſt manifeſt, as it ought to be ſpoken." To which end you will be much in the ſtudy of Gods word, and oft at your devotions, imploring divine aid, for yourſelf, and ſpecial bleſſings for your people. And in imitation of the Apoſtle Paul, you will now, and at all times gratefully acknowledge it as a particular favor done you by your people, to make mention of you in their prayers, whenever they pray for themſelves.—That great Apoſtle, tho' endowed with an uncommon meaſure of knowledge and grace, and poſſeſſed of excellent gifts, found by experience, that he needed the prayers of all good men. Had you, dear ſir, the greateſt meaſure of ſanctification, knowledge and gifts, and were you in great favor with the Lord, you would

ſtill need the prayers of others. Paul was abundant in his importunity leſt he ſhould be forgotten by the Saints. Have you many ſhining talents, many qualifications which may diſtinguiſh you in your office—have you the ſpirit of grace, and are you endowed with an excellent gift, in prayer, you have equal need, with others, to recommend yourſelf to the prayers of God's people. And to remember, that the force of prayer ariſes not from the dignity of the perſons praying, but from faith in the promiſe—many joining together in the prayer of faith, as one man, their prayers are of great force with the Lord. "If any two of you, ſays our Saviour, ſhould agree on earth upon any thing, whatſoever they ſhall deſire, it ſhall be given them, of my father who is in Heaven."

Your calling will require a continual ſpring of activity and diligence, of reſolution and patience, while you prudently conſult the intereſt of Chriſt, and the good of this people, in regard of that variety of inſtructions, and the inſtances of condeſcenſion, in which you are to purſue the ſame. Let nothing prevail to make you meanly ſtoop to the luſts of men, or proſtitute your character, or work, to any corrupt or carnal deſign; or to ſerve the intereſted views of the ambitious or party ſpirited. Be of no party yourſelf, and if you meet with affronts, oppoſition, and abuſe, as is moſt probable, if you are faithful to your divine maſter; endeavour to bear them with firmneſs and patience; and let your enemies ſee that you can riſe above and triumph over all their inſults, in imitation of Chriſt, without perſonal reflection. While you ſhow them, that you are ſenſible of injuries, ſhow them alſo, that you inherit a ſpirit of forgiveneſs.

In a word, keep up a ſpirit of devotion, and let the life of religion be ever vigorous and illuſtrious in you. And, while you maintain a humble ſenſe of your ine-

quality

quality to your work, and trials, let divine faith derive to you, from Chriſt's fullneſs, a ſupply of all grace.— Be kind, and gentle to all men, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth. Let your ſpirit, and courage be raiſed above all that is mean, and unworthy the miniſterial character, and yet be ſo kind and condeſcending as may tend to win over ſuch as will not be gained by your preaching. Be ever attentive to your work, in all its parts, and active in the faithful diſcharge of the various branches of duty, belonging to your office. Let nothing diſpirit, or diſhearten you, for conſider, how great ſoever your labors may be, or however grievous your trials, or whatever are your perplexities, at any time, you have the bible for your counſellor and ſupport; you will have the prayers of your chriſtian friends, you will have the countenance, eſteem, and friendſhip of all good men, and the kind advice of your fathers, and brethren, in the miniſtry. But above all, you have the promiſe of Chriſt's preſence and grace, at all times, and may hope to make additional improvements, in religion, and the divine life, in the courſe of your miniſtry. And the goſpel gives you a glorious and unfailing expectation and hope of future bliſs, when theſe mortal ſcenes ſhall end. "Be thou faithful unto the death, ſays the faithful and true witneſs, and I will give thee a crown of life." With what exultation and joy may you then, at the cloſe of your life and miniſtry, look backward, on your paſt labors and ſufferings, or forward, on the glory to be revealed in you, and on the happy day, when you ſhall meet with all thoſe whom Chriſt ſhall have given you, as ſeals of your miniſtry, who ſhall then be crowns of rejoicing to you, and whom you ſhall preſent to the chief ſhepherd, who will receive them at your hand with infinite delight

and approbation, and confer on you the crown of glory that fadeth not away. For this we pray and hope, and bleſs you, in the name of the Lord.

The church and people of God, who uſually worſhip in this place, will ſuffer the word of exhortation.

Men and brethren,

THE inſtitution of the goſpel miniſtry, by the great head of the church, was with the moſt benevolent deſign towards the fallen race of Adam. Its principal object is "the gathering of the ſaints, and edification of the body of Chriſt," till we all meet in heaven. What more benevolent deſign could have been deviſed, even by infinite wiſdom, or have been carried into effect, with greater advantage to mankind? May we not then, rationally hope for their friendſhip and candor, their influence and prayers, who are employed by Chriſt, to preach the myſteries of the goſpel, and to beſeech men to become reconciled to God.

Others, whoſe eminency in grace, and whoſe abilities and gifts, have ~~ſhewn~~ with diſtinguiſhed luſtre, in the churches, have ſet us the example of recommending ourſelves to your devout interceſſions with the father of lights. And, beloved brethren, if you conſidered the importance of our work, I am ſure, you could not but be earneſt and conſtant in your addreſſes at the throne of grace in our behalf: that by our miniſtry God's glory may be promoted and Chriſt's honor advanced; that precious ſouls may be recovered from the dangers to which they are expoſed; that our whole dependence may be on God for aſſiſtance and ſucceſs in our work; that you and your connections, who are ſpecially intereſted in our faithful diſcharge of miniſterial duty, may not be fatally diſappointed; and that the diſcourſes which we deliver may not be attended with conſequences the moſt dreadful, becoming a ſavor of death unto death to any individual!

Suffer

Suffer me more particularly to recommend your Paſtor elect to your fervent ſupplications, who is this day devoting himſelf to your ſervice in the Lord.—Whatever may be your opinion reſpecting his abilities, he will need your prayers, and will feel grateful for them. Fail not to intercede with God, that he would give your paſtor a door of utterance to ſpeak to you the myſtery of Chriſt, in a becoming manner. And be warned to take heed yourſelves that you provoke not the Lord, to ſhut the door of utterance; for revelation aſſures us, "if he open none can ſhut, and if he ſhut none can open." People, by their ſins, often provoke God to lock up the door of utterance, to take away either ability, or liberty of ſpeech, from his miniſters; when his people walk unworthy of the goſpel. But when a people humbly ſeek the gift of utterance for their miniſter, and open their hearts, to receive the word diſpenſed, God will keep them open, in ſpite of the malice of the Devil, and all the power of Hell.—

Eſteem your miniſter in love, for his works ſake; treat him with reſpect, and ſtrive to promote his influence, and uſefulneſs. Let not your expectations, from him, be unreaſonable, nor cauſe him unneceſſary labor, and trouble. To multiply ſervices, to exerciſe the labors and fatigues of the Miniſtry, will be a direct way to diminiſh the uſefulneſs of your miniſter, and ſhorten his days. A miniſter's "ſtrength is not the ſtrength of ſtones, nor is his fleſh of braſs." The ſtated miniſterial labors, proſecuted with diligence and fidelity, without unneceſſary addition, will, by degrees, in the courſe of but a few years, exhauſt a miniſter's ſtrength, and finiſh his days. Make the beſt uſe of the ſpiritual advantages, you may derive from your miniſter, while you enjoy him, that you may be happy in him here, and happy with him for ever.

This reſpectable aſſembly of Gods people, have attended

tended to the office and duty of both minister and people, as deliniated in this discourse; and they are doubtless sensible, they are both important. Your necessities require the frequent inculcating the doctrines of the gospel; and we need your joint supplications, that the same may not be without the desired effect. The time is short, in which we may hope to derive benefit, from the outward means of grace. Let us be studious, to improve them, to further us in divine knowledge, and holiness; that we may be in a growing meetness, for the rest, which remaineth to the people of God. Let us join fervent prayers, to all other branches of Christian duty, and thereby maintain a constant correspondence with heaven. And let us, by an eye of faith, anticipate the period, when prayer will be turned into praise, faith into vision, hope into fruition: When the institutions of the gospel shall have accomplished all the purposes of infinite wisdom and love, and when the ministry of men shall be superceded, by the presence, and glorious communications of the divine Immanuel.

A M E N.